



**Item:**

Neighborhood Innovation Grant Pilot with Gainesville for All d/b/a Gainesville Empowerment Zone (GEZ) Family Learning Center

**Requested Action:**

- 1) The Trust is asked to approve the recommendation to pilot the Neighborhood Innovation Grant with Gainesville for All d/b/a Gainesville Empowerment Zone Family Learning Center and provide an investment of \$125,000.00 for the project.

**Background:**

The neighborhood innovation grant is built on the foundation of partnering strong neighborhoods, community partners, and quality early learning businesses as a path to addressing school readiness and achievement gaps in school. Strong neighborhoods “encourage cooperation, nurture a sense of security and belonging, promote skills and standards that help residents thrive, and attach social networks that help residents access opportunities and resources locally and externally as needed” (Kaplan, S.D., 2023). Research has indicated the importance of early childhood education, predicting not only later school outcomes but also career and work options, economic stability, health, and social opportunities.

The neighborhood innovation grant is intended to support an early learning business path towards quality. The perspective early learning business is in a neighborhood whose residents and community partners have started the work of building a strong neighborhood by investing in projects and programs that address residents’ social determinants of health, physical health, and economic stability. The neighborhood could use early learning educational supports to address access, literacy achievement, kindergarten readiness, and attendance.

The innovation grant will invest in the early learning business by increasing the subsidy for the daily rate per child for one year up to \$125,000.00. Based on the outcome of this pilot, early learning businesses who meet the criteria will have an opportunity to apply for future funding.

The Gainesville Empowerment Zone (GEZ) Family Learning Center is a joint project by Gainesville for All and the Alachua County Public School District. Located on the property of W.A. Metcalf Elementary School, the mission of the Gainesville Empowerment Zone Family Learning Center is to empower children and families from six weeks to age five and with tools that will enhance their lives by providing them with a high-quality educational foundation and connections to vital social and community services. GEZ mission is to reduce disparities in

English Language Arts Achievements and close the achievement gap among black and white students in Alachua County. Rising Kindergarteners from GEZ are most likely zoned for two elementary schools working towards improving kindergarten readiness rates and third grade level reading scores, Metcalf and Rawlings Elementary School. Both elementary schools have scored the lowest in Alachua County in years past. Both elementary schools and GEZ are surrounded by a middle school, charter schools, and community partners who have infused resources for families and youth to thrive.

**Programmatic Impact:**

Goal 2- Children and youth can learn what they need to be successful.

**Fiscal Impact:**

\$125,000.00

**Recommendation:**

The Children's Trust staff ask for the approval of the requested action.